

Teacher Salaries

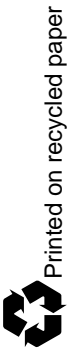
Continued

BULK RATE
U. S. POSTAGE PAID
Permit #92
Olympia, Washington

News & Views

State Representative
GIGI TALCOTT

PO Box 40600
Olympia, Washington 98504-0600



Let Me Know If
I Can Help

Getting help from state government can sometimes be a frustrating experience. If you have a problem with a state agency, please feel free to call me. I am here to serve you as well as represent you.

Toll-free legislative hotline
during session
(800) 562-6000

Direct
(360) 786-7890

28th District
News & Views

from your State Representative
Gigi Talcott



April 1999

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

I wish you could come spend the day with me in Olympia. This year's session of the Legislature is unusual because Republicans and Democrats have an equal share of everything. From having two chairmen on each committee to taking turns running meetings, everything is evenly split. Because of this, some issues haven't even been given a public hearing, while other issues have had twice the debate and twice as many people working on solutions — and that may be better for everyone in our state. It's a most challenging and exciting time to serve you.

Here's a brief update on some of the issues we're still debating. I believe it's important you know how you're being represented and that I learn more about the issues you care about.

I value your advice. I depend on your ideas. I believe that my job is to give you a stronger voice in shaping the laws that govern our state. If you have any comments or suggestions, please call, write or visit me. I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Gigi Talcott

Gigi Talcott

PO Box 40600
Olympia, Washington 98504-0600
(360) 786-7890

Toll-free Legislative Hotline
(800) 562-6000



Education

Virtually every education proposal has passed the House of Representatives unanimously this year. We have worked hard to adopt policies that will improve student achievement in our state’s public schools.

As co-chair of the Education Committee, I’ve helped write an education budget that will increase funding for schools and provide a pay increase for teachers. Unfortunately, the challenge of improving public education is not as simple as just giving educators more money.

I believe that when we raise expectations and give teachers the tools they need to get the job done, the kids will do the rest.

School Accountability

Until now, we’ve known a new graduation requirement was coming, but it lacked definition, or even a proper name. That’s why I sponsored legislation, HB 1674, to define this new requirement, called the CAP — or Certificate of Academic Proficiency. Soon, every student in Washington’s public schools will be required to demonstrate proficiency in reading, writing, communications, math and science before graduating from high school.

School Construction Funding

In Washington state we depend on timber sales to pay for school construction. Timber sales are down, so funding is down. What do you think of the idea of dedicating lottery revenue to build schools? I think it’s a great idea. Lottery dollars are predictable — and by passing legislation formally connecting the lottery with school construction, we would finally honor the expectations of voters who supported creation of the lottery as a way to finance education.

The Budget

House members have been, and will continue working together to reach a bipartisan budget agreement. The political realities of the current session mean Republicans are working closely with Democrats who control the Senate, the governor’s office, and half the House. The budgets written by Democrats are geared toward raising the legal spending limit as high as possible, both this year and in the next two-year, \$20 billion budget.

I disagree. Should we spend as much as possible just because we can? Do you max out your credit card just because the limit has been raised? I will continue protecting the taxpayers of Washington by supporting policies that spend tax dollars responsibly, fairly, and with accountability. Our budget should save something for emergencies, such as severe mudslides or flooding, or for increases in school enrollment or a downturn in the economy.

Mail Theft

Have you had your mail taken from your mail box? I have. It takes hours and hours to get things back in order — and victims are never sure that everything gets fixed. By passing HB 1059, we want to send a strong message that mail theft is not a prank. It’s a serious federal crime — and if this measure becomes law, a serious and punishable state crime as well.

Transportation

We all know how frustrating it is to be stuck in traffic! When voters passed Referendum 49 in November, they asked us to redirect the dollars they pay for license tabs into projects that will ease traffic congestion, and move apples, wheat and computer chips more quickly by truck and by train.

The House has passed a transportation budget that will upgrade highways right here and all over the state. You can’t listen to a traffic report without hearing about back ups on Highway 16 and I-5 through Tacoma. The bipartisan budget includes more than \$50 million for a major fix to the Nalley Valley interchange and to widen five miles of HOV lanes on Highway 16. It also dedicates more of your state gas tax dollars for city and county roads and projects.

Children’s Health Care

This year, the House has been considering legislation dealing with state-subsidized health care for children. Instead of expanding state-subsidized health care for families of four earning \$41,000 per year (that’s 250 percent of the federal poverty level), I believe our emphasis should be on finding and serving the 67,000 needy children who are already eligible for coverage, yet are not being served. The issue could become highly political, but I’m working to see that doesn’t happen.

Northwest Salmon

The federal government just issued endangered species listings for several varieties of a treasured symbol of our state — Northwest salmon. We all want to protect salmon from extinction, but it’s a very expensive proposition. We may need to spend \$200 million in the next two years for salmon recovery, or federal officials could step in and take over. Rebuilding salmon stocks will not be easy for anyone, which is why we must have clear goals and performance standards. Equally sharing the burden of recovery is as important as ensuring that our tax dollars are spent on those programs where they will do the most good.

Legislators are working long hours and are finding the balance that will ensure our time and your dollars are spent where they’ll do the most good.

Teacher Salaries

As the co-chair of the House Education Committee, I’m in the thick of the battle on the issue of raising teacher salaries. A town hall meeting I hosted for the community was attended by more than 300 teachers who came to voice their opinions on the salary issue. Although my town hall turned into more of a teacher rally, I value the tough job teachers do for us every day. Now I’d like to know what you think about a proposal on teacher salaries.

Specifically, I’ve helped write a teacher compensation plan that would give every classroom teacher a \$2,000 pay raise this year, and permanently increase every row and every column of the state’s teacher salary schedule. This way, we give a higher proportion of dollars to increase salaries for teachers in their early years. Increasing every teacher’s salary over the next two years will help attract fine college students to the profession.

In addition to the \$2,000, I support adding three professional staff days to the current 180-day contract. This offers a double bonus for teachers: extra income, and more time to train and prepare to help students. The extra \$230 per day for three days adds an average \$690 to the \$2,000.

Some people talk about a “step” pay raise. Each year for the first fifteen years, every teacher earns an automatic additional 3.2 percent pay raise. Any salary increase the Legislature authorizes is above and beyond the automatic 3.2 percent per year.

I have been disheartened to hear the Governor say some of us are “going to put money in one pocket and take it out of the other.” It’s clear that health care costs have skyrocketed around the state. Plans covering teachers are not spared from higher costs. Taxpayers currently provide \$335 per month to cover health care for each teacher, but premiums are expected to rise \$60 per month per person. Our plan would ask teachers to cover less than \$2 of that increase.

Sample Scenario Under the Two-Year Budget

These figures do not include an extra \$2,820 per teacher for training & health care

Beginning Teacher

Salary in '99	\$22,950	18.4% Increase
Within 2 years	\$27,162	

Mid-career teacher — with 9 years experience and 90 completed credit hours of continuing education

Salary in '99	\$35,962	14.1% Increase
Within 2 years	\$41,044	

Veteran Teacher — with 15 years experience, a Master's degree and continuing education

Salary in '99	\$46,095	5.8% Increase
Within 2 years	\$48,788	

Average Teacher — Did you know the average teacher makes \$40,892 in our state? Under our plan, the average teacher would make \$43,836.

*Source: Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.